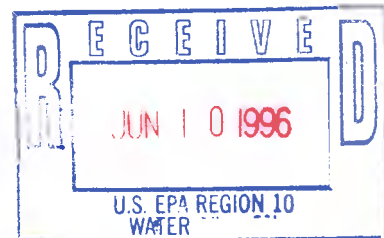


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STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

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June 4, 1996

Mr. Phil Millam, Director
Office of Water, OW-135
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 10
1200 Sixth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98101

Mr. Larry Koenig, Assistant Administrator
Community Services
Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
1410 N. Hilton
Boise, ID 83706-1255

Dear Mr. Millam and Mr. Koenig:

RE: Spokane River Metals and Proposed TMDL

A copy of the Spokane River study report entitled Cadmium, Copper, Mercury, Lead, and Zinc In the Spokane River: Comparisons with the Water Quality Standards and Recommendations for Total Maximum Daily Loads is attached for your review. The Spokane River has historically contained high levels of several heavy metals primarily resulting from mining activities occurring in the Silver Valley of northern Idaho. This study was conducted using new techniques for metal sampling and analyses to determine Spokane River water quality as it relates to recently revised Washington State water quality standards for metals and the River's 303(d) listing. The report confirms that, at least seasonally, the river still exceeds the water quality standards for zinc, lead, and cadmium at the state-line. Mercury and copper were also found in concentrations which also warrant concern. The report does not address the potential cumulative toxic effects of several elevated metals present in the aquatic environment such as those in the Spokane River.

Because of the interstate issues related to Spokane River quality and the clean-up efforts begun in north Idaho, Ecology feels that the opportunity is at hand to more holistically address water quality concerns of the Coeur d'Alene/Spokane River Basin and develop an equitable and consistent approach for eliminating toxic concentrations of heavy metals in the Spokane River. Ecology would like to begin the dialogue between EPA and the states for achieving this goal, especially as EPA begins to more fully implement the basin approach using recently organized basin teams. The timing is also appropriate since reissuance of the Spokane River Basin Mr.



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NPDES permits in Washington are scheduled for fiscal year 1997 (July 1, 1996 - June 30, 1997), and it is my understanding that some Idaho dischargers in the basin are also scheduled for permit renewal.

It has been suggested that a conference call could be organized for some time in mid June after people have had a chance to review the report. The purpose of the conference call would be to generally discuss the report and what the next steps might be for managing metals in the Coeur d'Alene/Spokane River Basin. Appropriate staff should contact Chuck Rice (EPA/Spokane) at 509-625-5189 or Ken Merrill (Ecology/Spokane) at 509-456-6148 to help organize the conference call and its agenda. If you would like to discuss this issue or have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at (360)-407-6405.

Sincerely,



Michael T. Llewelyn
Program Manager
Water Quality Program

Attachment

cc:(with attachment): Alan Henning, EPA/Seattle
Leigh Woodruff, EPA/Boise
Ben Cope, EPA/Seattle
Earl Liverman, EPA/Coeur d'Alene
Roger Tinkey, Idaho DEQ
Geoff Harvey, Idaho DEQ

cc: Sally Marquis, EPA/Seattle
Anne Dailey, EPA/Seattle
Nick Ceto, EPA/Seattle
Sylvia Kawabata, EPA/Seattle
Chuck Rice, EPA/Spokane
Steve Butkus, Ecology/Olympia
Greg Pelletier, Ecology/Olympia
Carl Nuechterlein, Ecology/Spokane
Ken Merrill, Ecology/Spokane